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The Quarterly Review

OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

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JANUARY 1960

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The Quarterly Review of Public Relations

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JANUARY 1960

IN AND ABOUT THIS ISSUE

To those pious practitioners who act as though the highest form of public relations practice is to propitiate the public, **William L. Safire** offers a dissent in **Was Mr. Vanderbilt Right?** (page 2). Mr. Safire, a vice president of Tex McCrary Inc., New York, advances a point of view rarely encountered in public relations literature: that the public is occasionally damned for good reason. The author is a former reporter for the New York Herald Tribune Syndicate and at one time was foreign correspondent for WNBC-WNBT. He became executive producer of Tex and Jinx Radio-TV Productions in 1954 and has held his present position since 1955.

* * *

From its inception, The Quarterly has run only original articles. We have never reprinted articles or speeches, and this will continue to be our general policy. However, one of the needs of public relations practitioners is the attainment of a perspective of our field. Since most of us came into public relations with a variety of backgrounds, we have no common heritage. When in our meetings, and discussions we argue professionalism, the functions of PR, the relationships to management, publicity, etc., many of us are not aware of what has been said before.

Moreover, public relations' growth has been greatest since World War II. Anything earlier seems like the dark ages. But, if we look back to those early days, we find that the issues we still debate are not new. It is important, we believe, to know what early writers had to say about public relations, and their predictions for the field. Yet much of this writing is not available, no longer in print. To fill this gap we are inaugurating an occasional series of "PR classics" —out of print material which still has contemporary value.

To start this series we offer excerpts from **Industry's Public Relations** (page 8) by **David Lawrence,** the distinguished journalist and editor of U.S. News and World Report. Mr. Lawrence has been on the Washington (and national) scene since 1910 when he joined the Associated Press. He is a widely syndicated columnist who wrote the first Washington dispatch to be syndicated by wire.

He deserves to be better known, we believe, for his views on public relations and his observations on its future development. Few public relations men will disagree with Mr. Lawrence's presentation, we think. Keep in mind, however, that his original audience was the American Management Association, and the time of his article was not only pre-World War II, but pre-depression. The year was, in fact, 1930.

We are grateful to Mr. Lawrence and the American Management Association (General Management Series 110) for permission to run **Industry's Public Relations.** We also wish to thank Walter Belson, Director of Public Relations, American Trucking Associations, Inc., Washington, D. C., for calling this article to our attention, and hope that other readers will nominate future "PR classics" for reprinting in The Quarterly.

* * *

Arthur Reef, author of **International PR for American Companies Abroad** (page 17) is executive vice president of Barnet and Reef Associates, Inc., New York. His long background in international and public relations includes service in U.S. embassies and public relations and journalism activities in France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian countries, and Mexico. He is a member of APRA, International Management Association, Overseas Press Club, International Advertising Association and the London Press Club.

* * *

One of the hottest subjects of interest to public relations practitioners these days is the "businessmen in politics" movement. Some take a "it's nothing new" attitude and express little excitement about it, while others believe it has opened up a brand new vocational field, public affairs. One of the latter is **John B. Halper,** author of **Public Affairs — Management's Fastest Growing Relation** (page 23). Mr. Halper is with Congressional Quarterly, Inc., a Washington, D. C. newspaper service covering the Hill intensively for newspapers and business. A graduate of Columbia University's School of Government (1947) he has worked on newspapers and in public relations. Recently he earned a law degree so as to better understand, he says, the "conflicting" fields of public relations and public affairs.

* * *

"The Image Merchants," current public relations best seller, is among the books reviewed by **Don Colen** in this issue (page 32). We hope that our readers will excuse us for mentioning that the book quotes extensively from the article "Notes on Judge Clary's Decision" in the July, 1958 issue of The Quarterly, authored by executive editor **Edwin C. Kepler.**

Was Mr. Vanderbilt RIGHT?

by WILLIAM SAFIRE

WILLIAM VANDERBILT, railroad tycoon was trying to get some sleep one night aboard his private car, when he was aroused by a newspaper reporter pounding on his door. He declined to see the reporter, who indignantly replied: "But I represent the public!"

Thereupon the Commodore's son roared back with the words that have been the bane of the existence of New York Central Railroad press agents to this very day:

"The public be damned!"

With the benefit of historical hindsight, we might well conclude that this statement caused severe damage to what we now refer to as his industry's "corporate image."

Indeed, a "public-be-damned attitude" became the *bete-noir* of textbooks and learned articles on the technique of public relations and almost every practitioner in the field today has heard himself saying to a client: "You can't adopt a public-be-damned attitude . . ." The PBDA—as the reactionary attitude may be referred to among communications counselors—might well be replaced totally by what the Federal Communications Commission has named the PICON: Public Interest, Convenience, and Necessity.

At a recent board meeting of a large corporation, the chief executive officer, with an eye toward increasing earning, made a suggestion about moving a certain plant's location, undoubtedly an unpopular move to at least one community and a segment of the company's personnel. The suggestion was met with negative head-shakings all around the table. "Bad for public relations" was the consensus.

The executive excused himself for a moment, stepped into an adjacent executive washroom, looked straight in the mirror, and silently mouthed the words "The public be damned!" Thus relieved, he returned to the board meeting and gracefully acquiesced.

In today's business community, 'public relations' has assumed an aura not unlike motherhood or apple pie. Very few redblooded Americans will admit they don't like apple pie—those who do are considered iconoclasts, suspiciously eccentric—and nobody at all will come out against good public relations. And as it became sacrosanct, it became a shield for abuses.

The less significant abuses—some corporate yachts and airplanes, fringe benefits to top personnel all written off as "public relations expenses"—do not concern us here. What is far more important is to examine the effect of public opinion on the operation of a business, to see how "public relations considerations" affect basic corporate decisions. Never admitting it openly, many an executive wonders when a public should be damned, when it should be pandered to—and wonders if there is ever a happy medium.

Let's set up a few ground rules that most businessmen will accept:

1. A business is in business to make a profit, not merely to make friends.

2. A business that has to cheat and lie to make a profit should go out of business, voluntarily or otherwise.

3. In the long run, a favorable public opinion toward your company or product helps create profits. Lincoln said: "Any policy to be permanent must have public opinion at the bottom."

4. The "long view" cannot always be taken in a competitive situation—a still longer view is staying in business. Lincoln was denounced as a dictator when he made the unpopular move of suspending the basic right of *habeus corpus;* sometimes, though not always, the ends justify the means.

Apply the above ground rules to specific situations, and see what happens.

Case One: Layoffs

1. A publicly-owned company, existing solely on defense contracts, lays off its men frequently whenever there are cutbacks. A committee from the town and from the union urges the company to begin a program of diversification, a good hedge against the cutbacks. The public relations counsel advises strongly for this, as the only way to win good community

and employee relations. The company's treasurer points out that the money market is very bad for a diversification investment at this time, and that since the cutback-speed-up cycle is profitable though unpopular, he advises that any thoughts of diversification be postponed. Which "public" do you "damn," your local community or your stockholders?

Case Two: Testimony

2. The president and owner of a company is called before a Congressional investigating committee. His reputation is important to him; as far as he knows, he has been honest most of the time, but there are a few situations that he would rather not go into, part of his distant past. Dilemma: Should he be a cooperative witness and try to answer everything?

Says the public relations counsel, who probably has not been told everything: "Client, you have nothing to hide. Pleading the Fifth Amendment would bracket you with racketeers and thugs and communists—it is essential, for your good name and for the public relations of your company, to answer all the questions to the best of your ability. If they get to a delicate subject, let your memory go hazy, but look like you're trying to cooperate."

Says the lawyer, who does know everything, because a client's relationship with a lawyer has been established by the courts as completely confidential, and a public relations man's has not: "If the questioning is more than superficial you start taking the Fifth. We'll accuse the committee of irrelevancy, take a contempt citation, and beat it in the courts."

Many a businessman, faced with this dilemma, will say: "I'll listen to my lawyer. A lot of good public relations will do me in jail."

Case Three: Disclosure to Press

3. You are planning a significant merger between two publicly held companies, on a three shares for one basis. A reporter hears a rumor and asks you for an interview. If the rumor sees print, the price of the stock of the smaller company will rise sharply, probably ruining the deal.

The reporter is sure to ask you to confirm or deny negotiations, neither of which you can properly do. If you deny, you are lying, and if you confirm, you spoil the deal. If you refuse to do either, you are tacitly confirming. You could take the reporter into your confidence and ask him to run nothing, and most financial reporters are extremely responsible men; some, however, may not want to run the risk of being beaten to their story by other newsmen.

Your public relations man wisely tells you that "it is very bad public relations to suddenly become unavailable to the press. And if you get

this particular reporter mad, he'll be sniping at us for years. From the long-range point of view, see him and let's try to get him to hold it." In the long view, you know he's right. But if you don't put this merger through, your company will be in dire straits and may never see the long view. You know the reporter's editor won't run a stock-stimulating rumor without some indication of confirmation, such as a refusal to deny the rumor—and if you don't see the reporter or answer his calls, he won't have that refusal.

At this point, "bad public relations" often sets in and many a businessman decides this would be a good time to go to a convenient hospital for a three day checkup.

Case Four: Lobbying

4. Your company is induced to locate near a certain city with promises of long term low property taxes. You buy and build a headquarters, and along comes a new political administration in the city that promptly threatens to raise your property taxes.

The matter is put to the city's voters in a referendum. Your public relations counsel prepares to launch a campaign to defeat the tax rise, lays out a plan using every trick in the book: ads and stories appealing to the city's fiscal responsibility, veiled hints to employees that higher taxes might mean lower wages, establishment of "independent citizens' committees" to support your point of view, the complete PR package. He takes a quick poll before he begins, assesses the voters as 60-40 against you, but feels an aggressive campaign can eke out a victory at election time.

You calculate the risk. If you win, you'll probably have to fight it out again next year; if you lose, you lose for good—they'll never lower your taxes once they're raised. Then you calculate the cost: the PR campaign will run about $20,000.

You talk it over with a lobbyist at the State Capitol. He says, for a $20,000 retainer, he will get the state legislature to pass a bill effectively blocking the city from ever annexing your property and raising your taxes. "Sure it's lousy public relations," he admits, "but the hue and cry in the city will die down after a while. And your conscience is clear—you're only making sure you get what the city promised you in the first place."

You write a check for $20,000 and give it to—whom? The Lady or the Tiger?

None of the foregoing illustrations was hypothetical; in each instance cited, an actual corporate executive was called on to make a deci-

sion, carefully weighing the "PR considerations."

The reason why no corporate names are mentioned here is that in each case, the decision was, in essence, "the public be damned." Damned it was, but with a minimum of fanfare: once the decision was made, the public relations man was called upon to sugar coat the pill as best he could.

Attitudes of PR Men Involved

Interestingly, the four PR men reacted differently. One quit in a huff, after telling off top management eloquently in a board meeting that he would never become a "mouthpiece for a company with no conscience." Another felt the same way, but he liked the money he was getting so he swallowed his integrity. The third, an organization man and generally insensitive soul, figured that whatever the boss decided must be right and he plunged in to repair the damage.

The fourth PR man, an independent Madison Avenue operative who is cordially hated by many and thoroughly respected by most, explained his reaction in this way:

"The function of a lawyer is to warn of pitfalls and discover loopholes; a Treasurer, or a CPA, contributes to a decision by showing quickly and accurately what the effects will be on the books; a registered lobbyist, at his best, can closely assess the chances of passage of pertinent legislation and predict what is necessary and to get it across.

"My job in this case was to calculate the effect of the alternate actions on public opinion, and to recommend the course that would be best for the long-range public relations of the company. The president listened carefully, agreed with my thinking, and did precisely the opposite. He decided the other considerations were more important, which was his perogative.

"No, I don't feel I should resign the account. I'm a professional counsel; I counseled professionally and was right about my area. If I were the company president, with the responsibility of looking at all the other facets in a decision, perhaps I would have done the same."

Too detached a point of view? Perhaps. But lawyers and accountants should not be asked for public relations advice, nor PR men for legal or financial opinions, unless they have passed the bar or are qualified financial men.

The sooner management men recognize the area of limitation as well as the area of competence of their various counsel, the better able they

will be to lay out clearly the factors in a corporate decision.

And the sooner public relations specialists realize that their special area is not always the overriding factor, the closer they will come to "professional" status and the easier they will find it to live with occasionally necessary "public-be-damned" attitudes.

The arrogance of the robber barons of the 1880's seems to have been replaced by the arrogance of those self-appointed "corporate consciences" today. A conscience in business is an extremely important thing, but there are those times when the native hue of resolution is sicklied over with the pale cast of over-emphasized public relations. The public, as well as the customer, is not always right.

In the next few years, as more public relations men drop the messianic pose and adopt a more professional attitude, we may see this significant consideration in a corporate decision—the "public relations aspect"—find its proper place in the management of honestly profitable business.

Yes, Mr. Vanderbilt, even in the future there will be a right time and place for your "public-be-damned"-attitude. But it's never a good idea to holler it at a reporter. ●

* * *

Silver Anvil Awards Competition

Deadline for entries in the sixteenth annual Silver Anvil Awards Competition is March 1, 1960. Any person, business firm, group, association, trade union, arm of government or other organization engaged in the practice of public relations, or maintaining operational functions of a public relations nature, or whose endeavors included specific activities of a direct public relations character between January 1, 1959, and December 31, 1959, may enter what they consider to be their outstanding 1959 public relations program. Membership in APRA is not a requirement, and will not be considered by the judges in making awards.

Details from Silver Anvil Awards Competition, American Public Relations Association, 1010 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington 5, D. C.

Awards will be made at the APRA annual conference, April 13-16, 1960, Greenbrier Hotel, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia.

Public Relations Leadership's Greatest Challenge

. . . "To me the greatest area for accomplishment, the greatest challenge to public relations leadership is this: How can we attract more of the right kind of young men and women into public relations? And how can they themselves be prepared for leadership? . . . I have thought about it many times and I always come back to the same starting point—people. In the long run, to do a better job, we must enlist able young people, and above all, develop leaders that lead . . .

"Our big challenge today is to set a new generation to dreaming about careers in public relations . . . Public relations' ground floor is yet to be finished, and there is infinite air space above."

—KENNETH YOUEL, *President,*
Public Relations Society of America, Inc.

A PR CLASSIC*

Industry's PUBLIC RELATIONS

by DAVID LAWRENCE

I ASSUME we are trying to analyze public relations in its broadest sense. I have had a number of years in which to observe not only the effect of public relations but some of the methods by which public relations are conducted in American industry, and there have been formed, as a consequence, certain impressions which I shall try to describe, impressions which I do not claim are infallible but which in any event will form the basis for any discussion of public relations.

I regard the problem as one of external relations, in the sense that first of all we are considering the effect of the sales policy, if you will, of a company—what is the effect of its public activities, its contact with the public in the pursuit of its business? We may say, at the outset, that there is a problem of external relations in every business. It touches sales if there is a desire to increase opportunities to market products. It touches the financial standing of a business if the company some day must appeal to the public in flotation of securities. It touches good will and prestige with respect to the individuals who may happen to be presiding over an industry or over the particular enterprise. I think, therefore, we must regard it as a department almost by itself in every business. It is difficult, indeed, to relate it to the functional organization of modern business.

I have thought a good deal about the tendency of modern business to put a department in a groove and say that it shall be responsible for certain activities, and that it shall do its job as if it were a unit in a particular company. I do not think of a department of external relations as having any such allocation. I think of it very much as we are now thinking of budget control in modern industry, particularly in large corporations.

* This, the first in a series of occasional "PR classics," is excerpted from a paper prepared by David Lawrence for the American Management Association in 1930.

Let us take an illustration—the budget control system of the Federal government. It took a long while to settle a debate as to whether the Budget Bureau was a part of the Treasury Department or whether it was a part of the entire government, responsible to the executive though created by Congress. What is the Budget Bureau? Merely an office in the Treasury Department? No, it has its representatives in every department and bureau in the government. It has the right to penetrate into every branch of the administrative machine.

So I think of the department of external relations as somehow not functionalized as a unit by itself, but as related in the chart of organization to every single department or branch or activity of the business. It will be inferred from this that I attribute great importance to it. I think it is so important that if you must relate it to a functional organization, it should report directly to the president or the responsible head of the business. Indeed, I will go further. I will say that as I visualize public relations, the individual in charge of it should be the vice president of an organization in close touch with the president, or else the public relations man should occupy a position of equivalent importance, without title. He must attend all the conferences, no matter how intimate they may be, if he is to know what is going on inside the business.

Keeping the Public Relations Man Informed

The weakness I have detected in the work of men who have the responsibility of public relations is that they are not kept constantly informed by the heads of their own business as to what is going on within those businesses. The public relations man, therefore, must know the policies: he must know the programs; he must know every detail of the business. . . .

Taking public relations in the single sense of affecting the company's prestige when it happens to be involved in a controversy—if I were charting the department of public relations, I should also put in a very important and conspicuous place, the activities of a public relations man as they relate to controversy. I am describing in both instances the department of public relations as I visualize it—as efficiently as it can be organized in the ideal sense, knowing fully well there are many companies in which this could not be attained. After all, we are discussing an objective.

We then come to the relationship between the word "public relations" and "advertising", for they involve misunderstanding just as we shall encounter difficulties in distinguishing between public relations and pub-

licity. Public relations, of course, embrace activities in the advertising field. No advertisement was ever written that did not impute to the company or to its product, a certain relationship with the public it was trying to reach. The public gets an impression of the company from its advertising.

Take an extreme case: suppose a company were so indiscreet as to put in its advertising something which offended public taste and decency. You will say the advertising man will not permit that. No, but there are many twilight zones which are not readily detected at once, and the man who has made a life study of reaction, occasionally is the one to make a suggestion even to the advertising man.

If the public relations man is made subordinate to, unrelated to any other department in the company, so that he does not dare say to the sales manager: "I think this would be a good thing to do," my conception of a public relations man has not been understood.

Advertising is a form of public relations. It is a method by which most companies express themselves to the public for the purpose, of course, of selling goods—and very often nowadays for the purpose of cultivating good-will as a background for the sale of goods, because in the severe competition today between companies manufacturing rather similar products, it is the character of the organization, it is the capacity of the manufacturer, its record, its entire institutional value which frequently register on the mind. I need not mention the number of large corporations which today are not failing to emphasize the institutional side as a method of increasing sales.

I realize there is a controversy as to the commercial value of all that, but I contend that more and more in the next ten years, or even five years, we shall find that method of creating good-will a very valuable, and an increasingly important factor in sales.

Now we come to the question of publicity in its most general sense. I realize that it has a meaning inside an organization and outside. A certain amount of good-will cultivated externally has its reaction upon the internal organization. Individuals in a large company particularly, are proud to be associated with an enterprise which has a good reputation. Being isolated, knowing very little about what is going on in the world, the people within a corporation, within a business, are eager to know what is being said outside, something of the letters being received, something of the attitude of mind of the people on the outside with respect to the company in which they spend their days. But externally when we think of pub-

licity, we think immediately of news announcements, and we come into a field which is very much debated among newspaper men—debated just as much by those who do not understand the true functions of publicity as by the critics of all so-called business news.

I think that we need not concern ourselves much with what has been the attitude of newspapers in the past toward publicity, unless we are going to define the term as "free" publicity, which denotes a certain deception—getting something printed for which the newspaper ought to be paid on the display side of advertising. I do not think we need go into that very much because it is generally known that there is a difference between material that should go into the advertising columns and material that should go into the news columns. I have no doubt that an intelligent newspaper editor and an intelligent public relations man know the difference.

So we really should take up publicity in the sense of news and announcements to which the public is entitled. The modern newspaper is not able to station a correspondent in some of the large factories, in some of the large industries, and yet news emanates from many of these large institutions. They are virtually cities in themselves. Their relations with other industries are extensive. . . .

This much is true: news is a thing which the public wants to know. If the public does not want to know, after many months of discussion, when a certain automobile which has been mysteriously discussed for those months is about to come on the market, if the public does not care what the price of that automobile is to be, if it does not care how many are to be produced then, of course, it is not news. But if it realizes that the entry into the automobile market of a new model to be produced on a large scale, requiring larger quantities of raw materials, affecting the prosperity of a whole region of our country, if it sees all those relationships, why of course that is news.

The obligation of the public relations man of every company, therefore is to try to understand what is news and to issue that news in as simple a form as possible, so that newspapers may print it for those who really want to know about it.

Publicity has taken on various aspects, what I might call artificial news as distinguished from natural and spontaneous news. I believe most of the objections heard among newspaper men relate to this so-called artificial news, the effort to develop public interest artificially; the effort to get attention for any event or celebration, or something which is entirely

created by the company in question. I do not exclude even that, I do not say that that is not news. I say it is, but it must stand its test as to how much public interest there is. The fact that it is artificial in the first instance does not prevent it from becoming natural in the last instance.

Opinions differ among newspaper men on this subject, and I do not reflect the views of any group in the newspaper business. I am merely stating my own personal impressions on this subject, impressions which would be the basis for action on my part if I were to become vested with the responsibility of doing the public relations for a large company. I should see it through those eyes because I think it is the most effective way of tackling the problem.

There is merit, in my judgment, in the attitude of newspapers in insisting that news that does not come from bona fide newspaper men who make their living from that business should be subject to scrutiny, because the temptation there is to misrepresent, to put the best foot forward and withhold the facts. I would not have it thought, however, that I believe there is deliberate misrepresentation or deception in a considerably large number of places.

The interesting thing about the last few years is that public relations men of various companies have understood these points, have tried to conduct themselves in that way and have won the confidence of a large number of newspapermen for that reason. They have been able, I believe, to convince their executives that publicity is not a substitute for advertising but that they complement each other in the sense that the favorable impression produced on the public mind through one or the other, will relate to the reputation of the company.

There is a timidity on the part of business to express itself. Why do so many businesses wait until they are ill, until the critical moment to do anything about the charges that are so often made against them? Why is it that they will call in the doctors so often only after the illness has seized them, and how little attention they pay to what we might call preventive medicine!

Probably it is a process of education and evolution but fundamentally I think business is timid. The average business executive hesitates to appear in public, either individually or on behalf of his company. He does not realize that in controversies, particularly, he has just as much the right of petition as any individual citizen. He nevertheless gets into controversies of various kinds of a public character. He hesitates to use his right of pub-

lic petition; he does not like to put his case in a conspicuous way before the public; he will seek some roundabout rather than the direct way.

Looking back over the controversies in which large corporations have been engaged in the last 20 years in a majority of instances if they were to apply hindsight they would admit they were too timid at the outset in not announcing their case clearly at the beginning, in not fighting for their rights openly and in not carrying their case to the court of opinion. I think in that respect, however, things are changing. I think there is a growing recognition all the time of the importance of making a case, if you have one, and trusting to the common sense of the public, as well as to its spirit of fair play, to render a final judgment.

In order to emphasize my viewpoints, I shall attempt to answer the following questions:

Are Sound Public Relations Worth Cultivating?

The answer to that is a clear as the question: is it worthwhile to have a good reputation as an individual in this world?

Does Industry Need to Interpret Itself to the Public?

It needs to interpret itself constantly. In recent years it has benefited very much by the great work done by the trade associations which have been the spokesmen of industry. But parenthetically, may I remark, that there is a tendency to leave it to the trade association to speak for an industry, and leaders in the particular trade association are inclined to prefer that to direct participation by them in discussion of that industry's particular affairs.

What Does the Public Think of Business?

The public has an idea that business conducted for profit contains an element of selfishness and hence that the burden of proof is on business. Why that is so, it is difficult to understand, but we must face the fact that the burden of proof in our scheme of things is on business constantly.

What Does the Government Think of Business?

A very important change has taken place in the last ten years in the attitude of government towards business. I think it may be traced to the fact there are more owners of securities scattered throughout this country today than there were ten years ago, that more and more citizens are becoming owners of businesses, and that in a sense we have a popularization of industry which may account for the fact that political government is more sensitive to the curves of business than it used to be, and hence feels an obligation to cooperate with business which it may not have felt in the

days when it was confined almost entirely to attacking business.

There are two functions of government. One is the great protective function, the function which protects the consumer against unfair practice, against adulterated foods, let us say, against lack of sanitation in a community, protects the individual business against unfair competition. That protective function works against restraints of trade and monopoly.

Second, the function of regulation has been emphasized in the last 35 years, and so we have an idea that the whole governmental purpose is that of a policeman obliged to investigate and restrict business. Actually government has discovered that it must exercise the other great function—the cooperative function, the function which seeks to find facts for business, to act as a clearing house of information for business, to help business help itself. The elimination of waste is a conspicuous example of what can be accomplished by the cooperation of government to business.

I have tried in some of my radio talks to explain the cooperative function. It has interested me far more than any other phase of governmental activity, and it has gone further recently. Government even has extended financial aid to aviation, and now to agriculture, in an effort to find a solution of some of the problems of industry. The government recognizes that business must prosper in order for the country to be prosperous.

Administrations are accepting the responsibility for the economic welfare of the country during the time they are in power, and hence they are anxious that business shall be successful, that wages shall be as high as possible, that standards of living shall be high, and that profits shall be high. Government is nervous when business is not good for fear tax returns will be low and there may be some effect on the budget. Government is a partner in the prosperity of the country and that point of view today is different from the point of view I encountered when I first went to Washington more than twenty years ago.

From an atmosphere of suspicion and a belief that every business man came to Washington to seek special privileges, there is now an attitude of receptiveness when important business men come to Washington to discuss their problems, for they often bring information of value in framing policies of cooperation between the government and business. There is far more cooperation between business and government today than there is regulation, if we can use the terms relatively, and in the long run it will be of greater significance that the government is cooperating with business than that it is exercising a regulatory function.

More and more as we understand law, understand restrictions of

government, the tendency to litigation instead of conference is proved not only a painful, but an expensive process, which interferes with legitimate business. . . .

Who Should Be Responsible for Public Relations, the Whole Organization or a Public Relations Department?

The responsibility ought to be centered in a department. The whole organization should take part. It should be conscious of the existence of the department. It should feed to that department, information, ideas, suggestions, and that department should be in contact with all branches of the business so that it may absorb from the other parts of the business any ideas or suggestions that would be helpful.

What Is the Function and Place of a Public Relations Department?

At the outset I suggested that it had a place all its own in the functional organization, and that it should be directly responsible to the head of the business because it is the policy-making side. Very few businesses are so organized that anybody but the president of the company can make the policies for a company.

Can Public Relations Activities Be Put on a Professional Plane, Similar to Accounting, Engineering, Etc.?

I think they can. The time will come when public relations men will organize to learn from each other the best ways of doing their work, and the ethical standards they should apply. I think public relations will achieve a better result if there are organizations in which such things could be worked out.

Is Professional Assistance Desirable in a Public Relations Program:

a. A full time public relations executive

b. Services of public relations counselors

Every company which has a public relations executive might well afford to have a public relations counselor—for the same reason that in the advertising end of a modern business we have an advertising manager and we have an advertising agency; without going into the question of how efficient that arrangement is or turns out to be in specific instances, I do think there is merit in the thought that the public relations counselor brings an outside point of view. He is studying the problems of various businesses. He is apt to discover in the problem of one business a valuable method, a suggestion, a solution which will apply in an entirely different business. Of course if a company can only have one, it should have a public relations executive in its own organization; if it can afford both,

I think the greatest efficiency is obtained when it has a public relations counselor on the outside as well as a public relations executive on the inside.

Can Staff Public Relations Activities and Staff Personnel Relations Activities Be Combined in One Department?

I do not think so. I think the question of personnel affecting the morale of the company is an entirely different problem, relates more closely to administrative duties than it does to the broad policies involved in public relations. . . .

What Is the Relative Importance of Publicity in the Whole Public Relations Program?

It is a very important part both from the affirmative and negative point of view. It does a company as much harm to seek publicity in ways that are frowned upon as it does it good to obtain publicity through legitimate methods. Often it is necessary for the public relations executive not to be sold suggestions for flamboyant publicity as it is his obligation to make known to the public things which in the long run it is going to learn. Truth will out, and a public relations man who recognizes that the facts should be made known as quickly as possible, is a man who has the best interests of that company at heart. Publicity is not merely mention in a newspaper; it is a work of constructive planning. It does not simply exist for the purpose of reporting to the public what has happened in a company—it frequently relates to a planning of activities on the part of the company which will be worthy of public mention. Quite often it relates to the discussion of policies that would have injurious effect if carried out. Again and again in large corporations, departments are doing interesting things. Activities are going on which the executives themselves do not recognize as having news value. A good public relations man will discover the news in those activities. Or sometimes he will be able to suggest activities which not only are valuable to the company but which will be worthy of attention in the press. . . .

I think we are just beginning to understand public relations in its very broad value to modern industry. When it progresses to the point where the public relations man has the confidence of the outside, the newspapers, the magazines, and all those with whom he has to deal, and when the company executives recognize that in the public relations department, they have one of the vital nerve centers of their whole enterprise, then, indeed, will public relations come into its own. ●

—Copyright American Management Association, 1930

INTERNATIONAL PR FOR . . .

AMERICAN COMPANIES ABROAD

by ARTHUR REEF

WITH the mass exodus of American companies and the establishment of American headquarters or factories in the European Common Market area and other parts of the world, problems in public relations, community relations, labor relations, government relations and many other allied public relations areas arise in increasing numbers to harass the American executive on the international scene.

These problems have been aggravated because lack of experienced international executives has forced many United States companies to send abroad domestic personnel who have scant or sometimes no international working experience. Inadequate preparation of the executive before he leaves compounds this problem.

The executive arrives in Geneva or Brussels or Sao Paulo or Madrid accompanied by wife, children and an American scale of prices. One result: zooming rentals for both offices and dwellings. Another result: American pressures for higher salaries. The inevitable aftermath: resentment and anger from local businessmen and citizenry who are forced to compete. This is often accompanied by rumors, gossip and even accusations of American business influence in local politics.

Other problems have arisen. It is the intention of many American companies to send a number of executives and their assistants abroad in the preliminary stage, periods of six months to two years. Gradually, these American executives will be replaced by local, national executives. However, it is U. S. company practice to pay these local replacements at a lower salary. Resentment is inevitable. The man doing the same job in his own country feels that he should be paid the same salary as his American pre-

decessor. This will be one of the key international public relations problems of many U. S. companies.

Wives and families of American executives going abroad have not been properly briefed or prepared to assume the public relations and community relations responsibilities they will face.

A story now current in Geneva, which may or may not be true, has it that the wife of a United States company official ordered a $3,000 air shipment of toys from the States so that her children would feel comfortable in their new environment. This, in Switzerland! It does not matter whether the story is true or not; that it is told and repeated is sufficient evidence of an unhappy public relations situation. At least three very exclusive country clubs in South America have quietly adopted a new policy —no more Americans. Applications from U. S. nationals resident in these countries are either lost or simply disregarded. This is not Communist activity. Hardly. These are exclusive, wealthy clubs catering to the top elements of South American society. But, anti-American feeling has progressed sufficiently to permit this bias.

Problems with the Press

Many United States company executives going abroad, even with some experience, are blundering into labor and press relations problems. Direct labor participation in management—the principle of co-determination—is a concept new and strange to the U. S. executive.

Accustomed to the free give-and-take of American press and to the objectivity and sense of fair play of the American reporter, these executives have created unhappy situations for themselves and their companies in their press relations. Ignorance of the party press and accompanying bias that exists in many countries and of different traditions in journalism has caused some unpleasant incidents.

Just a few months ago, one of the most important papers in Frankfurt, Germany, prominently featured a story and an editorial which read substantially as follows:

"American Company Assumes Ownership of German Firm and Promptly Discharges Three, Old, Loyal Employees."

This story was picked up in other newspapers in Hesse and other sections of Germany. The truth?

An American manufacturer purchased the factory and facilities of a German company. Unfortunately, some four weeks after the purchase, three important executives left the company for reasons which had nothing to do with the acquisition. Nevertheless, the local press seized on the

incident and accused the American company of arbitrarily taking over and dismissing loyal employees. No public relations planning or thinking went into this acquisition and when the incident occurred, the American company was caught flat-footed. It had no contact with the local press. It did not know how to make contact or explanation. The truth was lost in the turmoil and ill-will the American company created with government officials, the press, labor and the local community. The healing process will be long, difficult and expensive. The immediate effect on local attitudes, on cooperation from local officials and on sales is incalculable.

Unhappily, all this could have been avoided if proper public relations precautions had been taken. The acquisition of name and assets of one company by another is always a touchy and sensitive business, aggravated when the take-over company is foreign. The three key executives who left the old company had left of their own volition, and it was sheer coincidence that their leaving came within the same two week period. Because no public relations preparations had been made and no press relations contact established between the American company and the German press, the reporters interviewed those available or who had an axe to grind.

Newspaper attempts to make contact for the other side of the story had to be cut short because of deadlines and reluctance on the part of the American company spokesmen to meet the press. Even after the story appeared, there was no organized public relations effort on the part of the American company to correct the situation.

This incident is not unique nor isolated. It will be repeated many times, and in varied background, within the next two year period.

Expanded Markets and Competition

World-wide competition to American companies has become sharper. Before the emergence of the European Common Market, many European firms faced with limited national markets hesitated to expand production facilities. The prospect of a common market equal in size to the United States, has changed this philosophy. Many European companies are actively considering methods of increasing production. Amalgamation of companies, joint facilities and building of increased factory areas are some of the proposed solutions.

The marketing competition to American companies will be increased in other marketing areas such as South America and Asia. With increased production facilities, the European companies will have to assure themselves of markets in other parts of the world and not be vulnerable to

fluctuations in the European Common Market area. With increased production, more consideration will be given to sharpened market techniques.

Advertising, market research, public relations and product publicity will be used to an ever increasing extent. Public relations is, and will be used as a marketing tool to build company prestige and brand name, or introduce new products. Community relations, employee relations and all the other public relations services will have to be employed.

Expanded Use of PR Abroad

There is concrete evidence of the growing awareness of public relations and public relations techniques in other parts of the world. United States companies, most of whom are sophisticated in their knowledge and application of public relations, had begun in 1958, to use some of the same techniques abroad. In 1959, a surge towards such use by American companies had developed.

This has revealed the necessity of adapting and changing United States public relations techniques to meet local psychology, media and other requirements. American companies have begun to hire international public relations directors and to staff departments.

American public relations agencies are searching for methods of increasing effectiveness abroad and of serving their clients in international areas.

The international public relations specialist has been born and the first completely international public relations agencies, equipped to render all international services, have emerged.

Parallel with the United States development, has been the rise of public relations, public relations agencies and practitioners in every country of the western world. This has created problems.

Since public relations, by its very nature, has been variously defined by each of its individual practitioners, there are no limitations to the number and kind of men who can hang out a public relations shingle. Unfortunately, in many parts of the world (and this is true of the United States as well), individuals with no experience, background, education, training or ability to understand or perform a competent public relations function, now offer "services." And to compound the difficulty, distance or language differences make judgment or control more difficult.

Public Relations Practices Need Adapting

Many United States companies or United States public relations agencies have learned, to their dismay, that a man who offers long-distance

public relations assistance from Buenos Aires or Rome or Manila may have acquired his "experience" as a translator in the local telephone office. Too many United States public relations agencies or company public relations directors, who would normally make exhaustive reference inquiries in the U.S.A. before hiring a man for their own department, plunge recklessly into international public relations. It is true, many, if not all, of the public relations techniques and principles developed in the U.S.A. can be used, with proper adaptation, in any part of the world.

However, proper adaptation is vital. In the area of publicity, for example, good journalistic practices still apply. Translation is not sufficient.

A good story, newsy or with sufficient feature interest, will be used by *La Prensa* of Buenos Aires, the *Straits Times* in Singapore or the *Cleveland Press.* But, it must have a local angle. A good story for the *Cleveland Press* will likely be useless in Sao Paulo. There must be a frame of reference to factors in Brazil.

This problem is not solved by casually picking up a local man in the country. Translation is too often the attempted solution; it is unrealistic and useless.

What Should Be Done?

International public relations must be coordinated. It should be a combination of headquarters planning, preparation of basic material and budgeting, followed by local adaptation in each country where the work is to be done. Company headquarters must inspire the correct corporate image and basic objectives. Local operations should be planned to carry out basic objectives with due regard for local peculiarities, customs and prejudices.

The need for central planning and budgeting as well as local guidance will become increasingly important. Good community relations abroad should actively emphasize that American companies coming to the common market area, or any other area in the world, will mean increased employment, increased revenue to local business, tax revenue, local activities in the churches, in the schools, in charitable organizations—all the factors that make for good citizenship.

Executives should be briefed before they leave. They should be given some background information on local culture, language, history, tradition, plus some specifics on labor, labor laws, communications and media, the press and the radio, wage scales, cost of living in a country. Proper tribute should be paid to hyphenated identification. There is no

sense in trying to hide the American origins of a company. It will be revealed sooner or later.

The key to a successful international public relations atmosphere lies in establishing good partnership and good citizenship themes. It is Swiss or French or British or Brazilian and American cooperation that will make for success. Government, labor, the community should all be made aware of the fact that the success of such joint efforts and partnership, will result in the ultimate benefit to all. This is an international public relations function. ●

* * *

Is Your Corporate Image Showing?

Back in the mid-1940's, in an early brand image study conducted by Elmo Roper and Associates, a mysterious five per cent of respondents confused an otherwise coherent research picture. This five per cent was made up of fairly loyal users of Brand X who, when comparing it with its competitors, gave it the worst of the bargain *on twelve separate counts.* In the minds of these maverick consumers, Brand X failed to excel in looks, in design, in comfort, economy or durability, or in any other of the presumed determinants of product choice. The respondents' image of Brand X was quite clear and not very crisp. Yet they kept on buying anyway.

Why? The temptation was to pass off this five per cent as just an odd statistic. Instead, their answers to other questions were examined closely to discover why, in view of their reservations about the product, these people bought Brand X at all. The answer? This five per cent, although lukewarm about the product, turned out to be enthusiastic about the company which made it. Asked such questions as "If you were going to name a company for other American companies to use as a model for their general conduct, which one would you pick?" or "If you were to name one company as a model for the way labor should be treated, which one would you pick?" this group gravitated strongly toward the maker of Brand X. The product image left something to be desired, but the *corporate* image did not, and in the case of this maverick group, the latter proved decisive.

An image study of another product in a highly competitive consumer field produced, on the face of it, disappointing results. Brand Y was highly successful, familiar to almost everyone, but its image was bland and blurry. It called up vague connotations of quality, was generally respected and considered a "good" brand, but descriptions of it stopped there. Other brands had much more distinct public profiles. Yet this very vagueness turned out to be Brand Y's greatest asset. More type-cast brands, associated in the public's mind with quite specific groups, had sales as limited as their stereotypes. Brand Y, in achieving no very definite image, impressed itself on the public as "good for everyone," in both survey answers and supermarket sales.

Another not uncommon finding is the finding of "no image." Many products and corporations, whose images are clearly and lovingly articulated in the minds of company executives, call forth only a vacant gaze when mentioned to the public. But "no image" is not "no information." A company may ride for years on the momentum of past success and the loyalty of satisfied customers, but in today's shifting market, a stable business is an uncertain asset. If its reputation is sterling but circumscribed, a firm is unlikely to make headway in new marketing fields that may logically fall within its scope. It may keep its old customers, but firms with a stronger image are likely to get the new ones. Isolated from the public's thinking, insulated by success, company executives can become captive to a false confidence, while the foundations of company strength are being nibbled away. It is important to know what people think of you—even if they don't.

——*The Public Pulse,* November, 1959
Elmo Roper and Associates

PUBLIC AFFAIRS—

Management's Fastest Growing Relation

by JOHN B. HALPER

AT a time when the leadership of the American business community faces the challenge of achieving credibility and effectiveness in political and public affairs, one of the missing links in the corporate structure is the public affairs executive. This is the man needed to coordinate civic and political activities of interest to the company with the interests of the public. As such, this is a job somewhat complementary to, or perhaps an extension of, public relations where the main emphasis is on the company's relations with its various publics, its institutional image and the acceptance of its product.

Although both "relations" are an outward projection of the organization, public affairs is more concerned with issues than images. It is the science of selecting and relating major public issues, whether local or national, to company interest and of identifying the company's position with particular civic or legislative issues. Once the words "in the public mind" are added to "identifying the company's position" in the above definition, public affairs comes even closer to public relations and further away from lobbying and strictly legal concerns.

Meanwhile, the failure of some business managers to equip themselves adequately with what might be called "public affairs counsel" on the national level is already in process of rapid change, and the public affairs director is being called in to fill a gap between management and public issues.

The reason why public affairs has become important to business organizations at the national, state and local level is that there is increasing appreciation of the fact that, as Robert LaFollette once put it, politics is

economics in action. The conduct and profitability of business is affected at almost every turn by governmental and political actions, which largely determine the climate in which business must operate. To modify, correct, or improve that climate calls for more than letters to representatives in government. It calls for, in a very real sense, grass roots public understanding if not full public acceptance of an industry's, or a company's, or an association's position.

Business in Politics

Although businessmen are not new to politics in the lobbying sense, or in the sense of making personal contributions to candidates, they have never really shown much sophisticated and concerted activity in that area where the power originates: the constituents, who exert certain control over legislation by the not so simple means of selecting and electing legislators, or by not re-electing them.

It is only realistic to recognize that a principal concern of Congressmen and state legislators is to get themselves re-elected. On most issues they plant their banner where the most votes are to be harvested. This means that it usually is not enough to convince a Congressman that you have the best argument; you must also persuade him that your position will win the most votes for him.

One of the prime factors preventing more organizations, other than labor unions, from entering the field of political education and action is what one executive calls "the lack of anyone to head up the company program." What he means is that corporations are unable to define the requirements of the task or the duties of the man. That inability is but a reflection of the hazy, unsure notions entertained by management as to their objectives, further complicated by an admitted fear of rousing public antipathy and thereby undoing years of good and expensive public relations. Business has trained itself to be responsive to public opinion and is therefore naturally cautious.

Background—The Not-Too-Public Affairs of Business

Businessmen have engaged in politics, indirectly, in numerous ways. Personal contributions by business executives to the campaign funds of favored parties or candidates and the support of lobbyists and lobby groups have been leading methods. Officers of the country's 225 largest corporations and their wives reported political contributions aggregating $3.3 million in the 1956 general election; and more than 80 per cent went into the

Republican campaign chests.[1] Politicians who receive this campaign money, along with the solicitors who raise it and the contributors who donate it, agree that what it buys is generally an intangible something called "access." Often the matter is commercial. The federal government has become the country's single biggest customer and political contacts may help pave the way to government contracts.[2] Similarly, many bills introduced in Congress are of special interest to a particular industry; the opportunity to urge a particular point of view at the outset may be crucial.

Businessmen have come to think lately that, while they have devoted considerable time, money and energy to presidential contests and some of the more spectacular Senate battles, they have not paid nearly enough attention to ordinary contests for seats in Congress and state legislatures.

No ground swell in favor of abandoning lobbying is apparent in the corporation world. There is support for the view, however, that executives have fooled themselves or have been fooled by their business and trade associations into thinking that all that could be done was being done. Business already has thousands of organizations that could be mobilizing grass-roots support, but they avoid politics. As former Representative Ralph Gwinn has said:

> "If these organizations continue to rely on resolutions, educational programs, publicity, going through the motions of lobbying, conventions, and letter-writing campaigns to the few remaining members of Congress who agree with them, or to the many members who never agree, we might as well resign ourselves to living under a labor government for a long time."

Taking a cue from this line of thought, it has been pointed out that if only a small portion of the money now being spent by and for the many thousands of industrial and business associations could be spent precisely as the unions spend theirs, in preparing and distributing political action material and political 'know how,' it might have some effect.

The Positive Approach

Business generally has taken great pains to point out that their entry into politics is not motivated by anything so restrictive as a desire merely to combat labor in the legislative arena. The broad objective is more positive: to present business viewpoints, but with this difference—that the views be supported by votes.

Corporations today understand that there must be no question of obligation on the part of an employee to accept any views merely because

[1] See CQ Almanac, 1957, pp. 187-270; based on studies by the Senate Rules subcommittee on privileges and elections.

[2] Alexander Heard, *Money and Politics,* Public Affairs Pamphlet, No. 242, 1956, p. 14.

they are his employer's. They know, too, that the day of William McKinley is over, and there is no return.

Most indeed, would agree with Adlai Stevenson: "The whole history of American progress has been a history of constant government-business interaction—a creative interaction which has advanced the welfare of the whole nation."

It is from this context that the role of public affairs arises. It is the job, once again, of relating issues of the day to the company's stand, and then explaining *why* the company takes that stand. Like public relations, the role is variable and elastic under various managements.

After carefully weighing the disadvantages of implementing a public affairs program, whether real or apparent, several large companies have taken the big step. General Electric, a trail-blazer, along with Ford, American Can, Gulf, Monsanto Chemical and several others are feeling their way. Whereas their programs differ in scope and degree, they have the following in common: a nonpartisan approach and a fear of unpopular reaction.

Afraid of What

Fear of unfavorable reaction by the general public, as voters and as consumers, has probably been the major deterrent to overt political activity by any large number of corporations, especially the middle-sized ones who are only now beginning to venture into political waters. "Business would get clobbered in the forum of public opinion if it tried to do some of the things labor does," said one cautious business leader in the steel industry. "Our support (given to an issue or a candidate) could easily be a kiss of death." [3]

Another fear, that of losing sales, has led many corporations toward avoiding any issue that might be publicly controversial to such an extent that even the word 'controversial' has been left with sinister connotations. Competition is keen in most industries and anything that might remotely hamper the battle for sales has not only been suspect but untouchable. The prevailing view is that it is imprudent and unprofitable for a company to risk antagonizing buyers by getting mixed up in public issues while spending millions a year to promote sales.

Hoyt P. Steele has pointed out that "business must learn, and be willing, to express an evaluated point of view on issues beyond those having a direct impact on our immediate or narrow interests. We must learn to take a constructive interest in the full range of legislation, and not just the major headline getters." [4] The aim, he added, must be to help solve

[3] *The Washington Post*, Sept. 23, 1958, B. D. Nossiter.
[4] Manager, Government Relations Service, General Electric Co.

problems, and not merely to obstruct measures.

Corporations are also hesitant about shareholder reaction. The fear is that an objecting stockholder might bring a civil suit alleging that expenditure of corporate funds for political or non-business purposes was *ultra vires*, i.e., not within the enumerated powers of the corporation as spelled out in its charter.[5] Just the publicity attending a legal suit involving politics has been enough to scare off some companies.

On this point it is significant to note what Ford Motor Co.'s Director of Civic Affairs, Thomas R. Reid, had to say about the fear of getting involved. "I am soberly persuaded that, unless we make politics an essential part of our business, we are going to find it increasingly difficult to do business at all."[6] Along this same vein, a General Electric vice president, Lemuel Boulware, said, "Businessmen don't want to get into politics, but we have no choice . . . Being politically effective, as I see it, is now a continuing part of every manager's work and every citizen's duty."[7]

Behind the hesitation to enter public affairs with both feet is the simple fact that most corporation managers would rather concentrate on making and selling their products. They do not want to be bothered by ideas not related to the point of sales. Possible public affairs measures which benefit one industry might harm another company even within the same industry. (The oil industry's conflict between the importers of crude and the independent producers is an example.) The political action program of the AFL-CIO, on the other hand, blends content and method in a way that business associations would find it difficult to match.

Finding Common Ground with the Public

Many of the political issues on which virtually all businessmen think alike, such as reduction of high-bracket income taxes to encourage investment, are not the sort of thing on which an extensive vote-getting campaign can be built. And observers doubt that there is sufficient agreement on issues that would appeal to the mass of voters to push corporations into united political action.

But finding—or creating—that limited area of "sufficient agreement" is precisely the role of the public affairs expert and the reason why he must be put in place. For as pedestrian as most issues may sound, there is always cause for some publics to be interested. Stimulating that interest, defining the issues, interpreting the company's views and relating it to the public are duties within the scope of public affairs. And where there are issues in which the public already knows it has a stake—and can be made

[5] Legal Restraints on Political Activities of Corporations: Federal and State Law, Aug. 4, 1958. Legislative Reference Service.

[6] From a speech before American Management Assn., Jan. 26, 1959.

[7] From a speech before Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, May 21, 1958.

to see and understand the company's position—then the corporation finds not only common ground but an opportunity to engender the grass-roots support it seeks.

It is the job of the public affairs man to work as prospector in uncovering and defining those issues of mutual interest, and then, in connection with public relations counsel, to develop and explain those issues with dramatic impact. In this way the company's position is not only openly declared but made empathetically understandable.

Adopting this approach to public affairs will do for business in the 1960's what public relations has done since World War II. It is a logical continuation of the "open door" policy which has worked so successfully for business since it began issuing public financial statements not too many years ago.

But why, ask some, can't the public relations man add this job to the rest of his duties? The answer is simply that he has and can, particularly if he possesses a knowledge of public issues and government.

Public Affairs in Action

Who knows, for example, why some corporations are opposed to a federal school construction bill and yet approve a federal highway program, each of which cost money and confers a collateral benefit on business? Is the real answer that the former is a local problem while the latter, being interstate, should properly be a federal concern? And if this be the real answer, does it jibe with the public interest when hundreds of communities have inadequate classrooms? The question illustrates a type of major issue where a company's position might well be made known and felt by the community, and the public at large.

One Ohio-based company that has openly declared itself against federal aid toward school construction, for instance, has at least spelled out its reasons, good or bad. The important thing is that it is doing something positive rather than negative about implementing its views. It now endeavors to channel state revenue derived from gasoline taxes toward school construction within those states where its fuel products are sold.

Gaining public acceptance for doing this is clearly a public relations function but the selection of the issue—school construction—plus the know-how of putting the idea through the various state legislatures, falls within the scope of public affairs. This is one of many cases where public relations and public affairs work closely together to accomplish a company objective, usually from within the same department.

Case History of a Company Program

Following a special request sent to several recently appointed public affairs directors, I have chosen one reply as best representative of the duties and objectives of a carefully limited program. Continental Oil Company of Houston, the one cited here, has been growing in size and developing in stature during the last few years with signal success. In line with that growth pattern the company inaugurated a public affairs program this year designed to "begin and stay close to the top, for by placing the function directly under the president we mean to stress its importance."[8]

In theory and practice, the director is a political specialist and, as such, is a member of management with essentially a staff function. The job calls for counseling, planning, coordinating and expediting company problems in the public affairs field; and here "public affairs" encompasses all political and governmental activities. It is the responsibility of this office to provide management with every possible advantage in dealing with such problems.

Below is a short, four-point outline of the company's objectives in public affairs:

1. A program to protect the interest of the company, its stockholders, its employees and its customers. (This relates to legislation, lobbying, etc.)
2. To encourage employees to become more concerned with public affairs, to become more active in political party programs—and to show them how to do it. This is bi-partisan.
3. A program designed to encourage government service, both selective and appointive, at all levels.
4. To cast the company in a leadership role on important controversial issues—on the theory that it can provide factual information and counsel based on its business experience.

Generally speaking, Continental assumes that the corporation as such has no role to play in politics. As a business organization it intends to encourage and depend upon its managers and employees in their capacities as private citizens; and it is assumed that they will act in what they deem to be their *own* best interests.

If their own interests coincide with the company's interests, so much the better for the company. But the pointing out of mutual "interests," as well as selecting the issues on which they hinge, is clearly the assignment of public affairs as it continues to grow and take hold. ●

[8] Harold S. Skinner, Director of Public Affairs and Assistant-to-the-President (Leonard F. McCollum).

scanning

THE PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS

Each quarter Dr. Donald W. Krimel selects items from the various professional journals in the social sciences which have implications for the public relations field.—Ed.

LEARNING ABOUT YOU

"Education and the Challenge of Mass Culture," by George Gerbner, Institute of Communications Research, University of Illinois, in *Audio-Visual Communication Review*, Vol. 7, No. 4.

Here is a thoughtful, informed discussion of the development of education about the social aspects of mass communication. It deals with higher education especially, and with the United States, but the issues are universal. For some years the author has conducted a course on this topic, and he is concerned about the lack of progress toward adequate education about mass communication. Citizens who have little sophisticated awareness of the rest of the mass communications field can be expected, of course, to have unrealistic concepts about public relations.

Colleges and universities, especially in the past dozen years, have reached out quickly to embrace mass communication research. Psychologists, sociologists, and a new breed of specialists in communications research proper have been eager to get into a relatively unexplored area. With a few isolated exceptions, however, the universities have done little toward developing curricula in terms of a life wherein, whether we like it or not, television and its ilk increasingly determine social and mental patterns.

The educated layman should have a more nearly accurate picture of public relations—one aspect of the new mass communications world—than that given by sensationalized articles in popular magazines. Quite possibly education's main contributions to public relations will come through stimulating lay understanding of this and other aspects of mass communication, rather than through vocational preparation.

WHAT CAN A MAN BELIEVE?

"Communicator-Communicatee Discrepancy and Perceived Communicator Trustworthiness," by Jack W. Brehm, Duke University, and David Lipsher, Stanford University, in the *Journal of Personality*, Vol. 27, No. 3.

All other things being equal, the more a person originally disagrees with you—when you are trying to persuade him—the more effect upon his opinion you are likely to have. Sound strange? Several experiments by social scientists, during the past 17 years, have brought indication that this is generally true.

Far more predictably, other similar studies have indicated that as your trustworthiness lessens—in the eyes of your target public—your effect upon his opinion lessens also. The report reviewed here concerns the effect of *supporting arguments or data* on these relationships. It indicates that:

1. Perceived trustworthiness is *higher when supporting material is included in the communication.*

2. The more the target public originally disagrees with the communicator, the less the communicator will be considered trustworthy by the target public, *up to a point.* Then, however—

3. At the "extreme discrepancy size," the point at which the original opinions of the two are as far apart as they can be, the communication with supporting material produces relatively *high* perceived trustworthiness.

The authors, in a tentative explanation of this strange pattern, theorize that "the pressure to see the communicator as being low in trustworthiness depends on his being in some way similar to the communicatee." They suggest that the target public member may or may not think of the communicator as being "comparable" to himself, the communicatee. In the absence of other indicators, the theory goes, "comparability" becomes judged on the basis of discrepancy between the communicator's opinion and the communicatee's opinion. At a point, then, the communicatee sees the communicator as being so far out that the factor of trustworthiness no longer applies, in his mind. There is no longer enough familiarity to breed contempt. So the theory goes.

The Brehm-Lipsher results are interesting, and all the more so for being baffling. A public relations practitioner might check them against his experience, and, whether accepting or rejecting them, gain a bit in ideas or in wisdom.

WILL THEY REMEMBER IN DECEMBER?

"Predicting Trademark Effectiveness," by Harry A. Burdick and Edward J. Green, Dartmouth College, and Joseph W. Lovelace, Raymond Loewy Associates, in the *Journal of Applied Psychology,* Vol. 43, No. 5.

The authors compared seven trademarks for "effectiveness." First they decided that effectiveness involved three main factors: (1) salience, or how readily it can be seen and recognized; (2) meaningfulness, or how well it conveys connotations which are favorable and significant to the observer, and (3) memory-value.

Using established research methods to test these qualities in the seven trademarks, they found that if one of the three factors was strong in a given trademark, the other two factors were likely to be strong in that trademark too. They found also that by using the salience and meaning measures alone, they could "predict the memory-value with a high degree of success."

This seems a clear record of effectiveness in application of communications research methods to a practical problem situation. There is no suggestion, however, that the methods used by these authors take the risk or the art out of trademark design, or out of any other communication effort. The three criteria of effectiveness were chosen arbitrarily by the authors. These criteria are no doubt important, but of course they do not tell the whole story, a point well understood and well made by the authors. A trademark could have high scores in salience, in meaningfulness, and in memory-value, and still not have the desired effect.

BOOK REVIEWS

SCIENCE? OR SCIENTISM?

THE IMAGE MERCHANTS
By IRWIN ROSS, *Doubleday & Co., New York, 1959, 271 pp., $4.50*

BIG BUSINESS AND FREE MEN
By JAMES C. WORTHY, *Harper & Bros., New York, 1959, 195 pp., $4.00*

MANAGING BY COMMUNICATION
By WILLARD V. MERRIHUE, *McGraw-Hill, New York, 1960, 295 pp., $7.00*

PERSUASION: How Opinions And Attitudes Are Changed
By HERBERT I. ABELSON, *Springer, New York, 1959, 103 pp., $3.75*

According to Dr. Herbert I. Abelson's hopeful little book, "when the audience starts disagreeing with you, or when it is probable that the audience will hear the other side from someone else, present both sides of the argument."

Judging by what Irwin Ross, James Worthy and Willard Merrihue have to say, Dr. Abelson in all probability is full of prunes. First, Dr. Abelson is being scientific and public relations, as Ross points out, clearly is not scientific. And secondly, whether public relations and its clients know very much about listening as Merrihue questions, and are sufficiently perceptive as Worthy suggests, it is quite certain that "speaking out" does not usually include spending good money to build a case for the opposition. Nevertheless, the validity of Dr. Abelson's points raise a number of questions. Is public relations simply a consumer of scientific principles and procedures and is the profession and the public fortunate that public relations has not become involved in an attempt to work its wonders subliminally? Is there anything in the history of public relations and especially of its last ten years that promises a higher degree of precision in the decade ahead? Is public relations still in its infancy of testing anioms and postulates? Or finally, should public relations forget its pretention, remember its moral obligations and go on doing what it's being doing, in many instances, superbly well? Ross, Merrihue, Worthy and Abelson each have a point of view to contribute toward getting the answers.

The Travel Editor

Between his series in the *New York Post* and the writing of *The Image Merchants,* Irwin Ross obviously did a lot of thinking. The sensa-

tional gossipy view of public relations that made the newspaper series uppercase tabloid fare has been replaced by a thoughful, coast-to-coast tour of the profession. And if the Ross book is not enjoying quite the popularity of Milton Mayer's *Madison Avenue, U. S. A.* (THE QUARTERLY REVIEW, April, 1958), it is equally well written, equally fair and for the public relations practitioner at least, infinitely more helpful. For in presenting the seamy as well as the saintly, Ross has given public relations its first real chance to look at itself.

What the reader sees is the big boys at work (the Sonnenbergs, the Newsoms, the Byoirs) the men who carry copy (the Kambers and Garfields) and top-of-the-tower corporate gangs (the Fords and the U. S. Steelers). And the reader sees PR in all kinds of situations; being successful, laying eggs and worrying occasionally about the ethics of the profession.

Altogether, the view that Ross draws of public relations in *The Image Merchants* is surely not of a science, nor really of a profession but of an art that is intelligent enough to borrow the findings of the social sciences to improve its own techniques. Indeed, its most grievous errors have occurred when public relations has ignored the axioms that the Abelsons have been developing for some time. This, and not a tendency to "unsell" was more likely the reason for the failure of the six-months Cincinnati experiment to make the city United Nations conscious.

The Many-sided Science

Communication, as *Persuasion* illustrates beautifully, is not simply a matter of telling your story. Who is speaking to whom, when, why and on what occasion? What part does group influence play? When both sides of an argument are presented, which side should be given first? How effective is repetition? Is credibility important? How often is the persuader on trial?

These are the kinds of questions Abelson asks directly and answers equally directly. In 104 pages he has synthesized from some 140 references a large part of what is known and has been tested in the social sciences that pertain primarily to the business of persuasion. The highlights appear in five principal chapters having to do with the way to present issues, the weight of group influence, the durability of persuasion and the roles of the audience and the persuader.

If this is a readable book, it is nevertheless not an easy book to read. Every word counts; but every qualifier is a warning to the communicator who thinks he has hold of the public relations equivalent of "How I Turned $1,000 into $1,000,000 in Real Estate in My Spare Time."

But beyond Abelson's indispensable axioms of persuasion, there is the broader lesson that says the calculus of communication is not simply a matter of integrating one or two variables, but a whole family of equations are involved that are often most easily solved by successive approximations. This, too, is Merrihue's lesson.

The Expanding Universe

Managing By Communication is not wholly a book about public relations in the usual sense; but it is very much a book about relations with the public. Indeed, Merrihue is essentially pushing the concept that public relations needs to broaden its base considerably and to realize that what is involved in communications is essentially a relations function. This is applicable equally to the large corporation, in one of which Merrihue is manager of Community and Business Relations, and to the trade organization or any group that has a story to tell or a point of view to sell. Consequently, this is another short book (300 pages) with an extended message, and Merrihue carries off admirably the assignment he has set for himself. It should also be noted that Mrs. Merrihue has put together the best index in a decade of public relations books.

Actually, headings aside, *Managing By Communication* ranges broadly *and* specifically among three parts: the place of internal communications, the art of communication and the uses of communications internally and with various sections of the external public. These are tried and tested precepts that Merrihue expounds, and, as a pro, he understands that communications will progress only as it increasingly emphasizes persuasion and forgets that the day of the command has long since passed.

Operating from an underlying postulate that the communicator needs to "do right voluntarily," he is worried, however, that (1) too many of public relation's clients "put their faith in silence, appeasement and retreat, and (2) "Management spends millions to communicate, but pennies, if anything at all, in research on how best to exchange meaning accurately." And I suspect that Merrihue's inference that a number of communicators would change their habits of communication if they listened more intently hits public relations where it lives. This is surely Worthy's view.

The View from the Ridge

"Enlightened self-interest," Worthy writes in *Big Business and Free Men* "is subject to the same moral structures as narrow self-interest. There is always the critical question of intent, because intelligent self-interest is still selfishness; morally, it is on a footing with stupid self-interest." Here is a creed for public relations as well as its clients and undoubtedly a

shocker to Merrihue's managers whose listening habits are somewhat archaic.

Worthy has come close to producing the businessman's version of Galbraith's *The Affiuent Society,* at least in his deflation of the conventional wisdoms that guide too large a content of business communication. From his position as Vice President of Sears Roebuck, he picks apart much of the current business rationale that finds its way into every media of communication. What he offers in its place is an unconventional wisdom: "on all counts liberalism is a more suitable philosophy for business than is conservatism. It fits the businessman's innovating role and emphasizes, as conservatism does not, the need for promoting social policies that will preserve and strengthen that role." In short and to compound a cliche, *Big Business and Free Men* should be read by every businessman: it will be devoured by every communicator with any sense. —DON COLEN

BACON'S PUBLICITY CHECKER

R. H. Bacon Company, Chicago, 1959, 8th Annual Edition, 352 pp., $25.00

If the editors of *Bacon's Publicity Checker* were content to issue an up to date revision of this perennial working tool, they would be serving their users well. For there is no question that the *Checker* has become standard equipment for everyone handling publicity.

But, each year, the editors persist in making thoughtful improvements, and the 1960 edition offers perhaps the most significant change thus far. All purchasers will henceforth receive three quarterly revisions, in February, May and August. The revision sheets will be T-slotted so they can be inserted into the spiral bound *Checker.*

This revision service is a realistic recognition of the problem of all annual directories, how to keep them current. For instance, the editors inform us that the 1960 edition contains 3,601 changes in listing information. Since last year, 138 publications changed their names, 407 have new addresses, 517 have different editors, 296 are now published by different companies, 334 have new issue dates, 1,119 have different circulations, 603 editors have changed their editorial coding and 82 publications have been discontinued.

The new edition lists 3,567 business, trade, consumer and farm publications. Each listing includes the name of publication, address, editor, publication date, circulation, publishing company and code number to show what type of publicity release material each editor wants for his publication.

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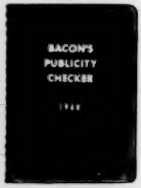

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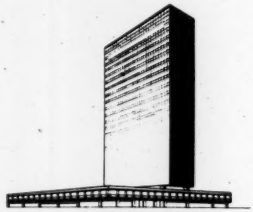

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